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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

EIU'S FUTURE TEACHERS SCORE WELL ON STATE EXAMS

CHARLESTON - Ninety-seven percent of aspiring schoolteachers graduating from Eastern Illinois University during the 1999-2000 academic year passed the required exams leading to Illinois teaching certificates.

The test scores for students completing teacher preparation programs at Eastern and 11 other Illinois public universities were released Friday by R. Keith Hillkirk, chair of the Illinois Association of Deans of Public Colleges of Education and dean of the College of Education at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, at a press conference in Springfield.

Hillkirk joined fellow education deans from Illinois' public universities, including EIU's Dean of the College of Education and Professional Studies, Liz Hitch, to publicize the test success rates of students at their respective institutions.

New federal regulations require U.S. universities and colleges to report "pass

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Eastern Illinois University emphasizes distinguished teaching in the liberal arts, sciences and selected professions. A traditional, residential state university of recognized quality, Eastern enrolls more than 10,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs. The university, located in Charleston, also serves the region through a variety of non-credit and off-site degree programs, as well as cultural and recreational opportunities. Eastern's pursuit of excellence attracts well-qualified students of an increasingly diverse population and a teaching faculty active in research and public service who utilize the latest technology.

rates" for teachers-to-be on respective state licensing exams, which vary from state to state.

The tests measured aspiring schoolteachers in the areas of reading, writing, math, grammar and knowledge of individual teaching concentrations - from early childhood education to such specialties as English, history, social science, biology, foreign languages, the arts and other content areas.

Pass rates at the 12 institutions ranged from 93 percent to 100 percent, Hillkirk said. Figures reflect performances of 6,398 total students who completed their preparation for teaching professions at the state's dozen public universities in 1999-2000.

"The results show we got an 'A' on our exams," Hillkirk said during the press conference. "Results show that our teachers-to-be overwhelmingly passed tests that measure basic skills and subject matter areas - and we're quite proud of their standings."

He added, "While we are pleased with the results, we want the general public to understand our commitment to teacher preparation cannot be assessed by a single test score. Rather, our commitment is much deeper than that. And I want to stress that we are working on a number of fronts to ensure that we prepare the finest teaching corps possible."

Hitch commented, "We are pleased that Eastern's future teachers have performed well on Illinois' licensing exams. Their success is a reflection of our high

quality teacher education programs and rigorous standards. We will, however, continue to work to improve our students' test performance and pass rates so that they reach 100 percent and will use the test score information to ensure that Eastern's teacher preparation programs continue to be among the very best in the nation."

"As Dr. Hillkirk suggests, the test score data should be used with caution since research confirms that using a single measure to assess student success or program quality is not appropriate. Additional measures such as grades in courses, test scores on instruments other than state tests, performance assessments in field-based experiences and student-prepared portfolios should be taken into consideration when examining the overall quality of a teacher preparation program as well as how well the teaching candidate has done when he or she has left the institution and begun to teach," Hitch noted.

Hitch added, "Hundreds of communities across the state have hired Eastern's graduates to teach their children. They know, from the classroom results that they see, that Eastern has provided the kind of program graduates need in order to be exemplary teachers."

She said 662 Eastern teacher education graduates took the exams during the 1999-2000 school year. "This is quite a large number of test-takers, and we are pleased that 643 of those students were successful in taking the state tests." Eastern graduates more than 650 students annually, making it the second largest producer of teachers in Illinois, Hitch said.

She said the most notable strengths of Eastern's teacher education program include:

- Eastern's teacher education program has been continuously accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) since 1957.
- Consistent, fair and high standards for admission to the teacher preparation program.
- Continuous assessment of student performance relative to high standards, systematically applied throughout the program.
- Strong K-12 partnerships that allow for school-based field experiences embedded in courses throughout the program.
- Increasing expectations for field-based performance (level, quantity and quality) as the program progresses.
- The integration of state and national technology standards into all teacher education programs.
- Strong and effective support for preparing a diverse teaching force (more than 60 minority graduates were placed as classroom teachers in the last five years).

Hitch said current initiatives include increasing the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning, enhancing outreach to remote areas that need assistance in preparing teachers in high need areas, increasing support for beginning teachers through a special mentoring project and partnering with regional offices of education and elementary and secondary schools to provide continuing professional development for teachers already in the schools.